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ABSTRACT

This brief history of women's participation in college sports at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, is divided into four sections. The first period prior to 1901 coincides with the later Victorian era. The second period from 1901 to 1926 includes the first World War and the passage of the 19th amendment. The years from 1926 to 1959 are spanned in the third period. A movement toward equality and opportunity in physical education and sports characterizes the fourth period from 1959 to 1978. Changing attitudes and philosophies about women's athletics are discussed within these time frames. (JD)

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WOMEN IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS AT CENTRE COLLEGE FROM 1860 TO 1978

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Centre College of Kentucky, a small liberal arts college in Danville, was chartered in 1819 for men only. Higher education for women was not available in the Centre area until a charter for an institute for young ladies was granted to a group of businessmen in Danville in 1854. This institution later became Caldwell College. In time, Caldwell College became Kentucky College for Women. In 1926, this school became the Woman's Division of Centre College. Gradually, the Woman's Division was integrated with the Men's division and by 1966, Centre College was a full-fledged co-educational institution.

This study was designed to trace the history of the physical education program for women and their participation in competitive sports at Centre College from 1860-1978. Efforts were made to present significant events in the history of sports participation by these students as they reflected cultural changes and national trends in physical education and sports for women.

Sports have long been a tradition of the men at Centre. The first intercollegiate football game in the South was played between Centre College and Transylvania University in 1880. The golden era of football at Centre was in the early 1920's when the "Praying Colonels" upset the mighty Harvard team 6-0 on October 29, 1921 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Football is still a part of the Saturday afternoon tradition at Centre. In written accounts of the founding and history of Centre College, the men's athletic programs have received considerable attention, but no history has been found which included any mention of the sports participation by Centre women. In fact, few histories have been written anywhere about women in sports and physical education.

In 1930, Dorothy Ainsworth (1) concluded that the earlier physical education programs in twelve selected women's colleges provided exercises entirely for the purpose of improving and maintaining the health of the students, but that in the twentieth century, there was a trend toward including sports activities that more nearly met the educational goals of mental, moral and social development. The earliest sports activity in which college women participated was horseback riding. This appeared at Elmira in 1859. Following this, croquet, walking, bowling and bicycling were popular among the female sex. Tennis and archery emerged in the 1870's and were soon followed by basketball and volleyball.

The depression in 1929 brought financial difficulties to all programs of athletics and indeed to student enrollment. Following the depression, the women leaders in the fields of physical education became concerned about the direction in which intercollegiate sports programs were headed. The philosophy of the leaders of women's sports of that day was reflected in the resolutions adopted in 1923 by the Conference on Athletics and Physical Education for Women and Girls. While the resolutions were not opposed to intercollegiate sports, the stress on sports for all skill levels made the emphasis on the select few virtually impossible because

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of the limited funds, facilities, and personnel available. The varsity programs were replaced by more diversified physical education programs, intramural programs, play days and sports days.

This study of the program at Centre College is divided into four time periods. The first period prior to 1901 coincides with the later Victorian era. It was a period of organization and growth for Caldwell College. The second period, 1901-1926, includes the period of World War I and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Caldwell College became the Kentucky College for Women during this period. The third period spans the years from 1926-1959. In 1926, the Kentucky College for Women became the Woman's Division of Centre College. The philosophical creed of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Foundation was a strong influence during this period. A movement toward equality and opportunity in physical education and sports characterizes the fourth period, 1959 to 1978.

1860-1901: The major concern during those early school days for young women was the health of the student. Physical education was mentioned in the very first catalog of the school along with a rule which stated that "young ladies are required to exercise on the verandas, or out-of-doors every morning and evening." In 1861, Dio Lewis opened his Normal Institute for Physical Education in Boston where he taught activities called "Light Gymnastics". These exercises were designed for flexibility more than strength. In 1865, the system of light gymnastics was introduced at Rockford, Vassar and Elmira. That same year, Octavia Gould, Instructor of Light Gymnastics and Physical Culture, introduced this system at Caldwell College. This was continued until 1870.

In 1885, Baron Nils Posse, a graduate of the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics in Sweden, was hired to teach twenty-five women instructors the Swedish system of gymnastics in Boston. Eight years later, Baron Posse's lessons were included in the Physical Culture program at Caldwell College.

Caldwell College, although only a good preparatory or finishing shcool for young ladies, seems to have provided a program in physical education which often paralleled that of the more prestigious Eastern schools for young women.

1901-1926: From 1901-1910, physical education was taught by the elocution instructor whose primary interest was elocution; however, it was during this period that sports became popular as extracurricular activities. This sports movement, led by the eastern women's colleges, soon spread across the land. The first Athletic Association was organized at Caldwell College in 1901. In 1903, Emma Hanna came to Caldwell College from Mt. Holyoke to teach mathematics. With the help of Edith Vaughan, modern language instructor, she organized two basketball teams at Caldwell College. The Kickapoos, a team composed of local girls, competed in a series of games with the Tuscaroras, a team of girls who lived on campus. A championship game was played at the end of the season. The Tuscaroras won this first game, which was played out-of-doors in late November. Spalding's rules, published in 1901, were used. According to these rules, there were six players on a team and the court was divided into three zones.

The Tuscaroras won again in 1905. The girls abandoned Spalding's rules after one year as being too restrictive and played by the rules used by the Centre College men, and that year, for the first time, men were admitted to the game as spectators.

The competition between the town girls and the house girls reached such intensity around 1906 that the college administration

took measures to change the structure to interclass competition and to change the names of the teams to the Cherokees (classes graduating in odd number years) and the Wahpanoochies (even number). Competition between these two teams continued until 1915.

The first intercollegiate basketball team competed in 1915-16, and the catalog was very explicit in its rules and regulations concerning participation. The team record for that first year was 8-1. With the birth of the varsity team came the death of the Cherokees and the Wahpanoochies; however, new intramural teams with new names evolved after a couple of years and soon intercollegiate basketball was abandoned.

After 1911, the physical education program was strongly influenced by Dr. Dudley Sargent and one of his students, Delphine Hanna, who taught at Oberlin College. Except for two years, all of the physical education teachers from 1910-1926 were graduates of Oberlin College or other Midwestern colleges.

In the twelve colleges studied by Ainsworth, activities other than gymnastics were first mentioned on the physical education program between 1906 and 1925 (1:31). Field hockey and tennis were included in the program at Caldwell College in 1911.

From 1920-1926, the stated goal of the Athletic Association was to provide an opportunity for every girl to participate in sports and each student was expected to spend one hour a day in the gymnasium or out-of-doors.

Until the beginning of the sports movement, women had only been allowed to participate in physical activity for health reasons. The demand for competition and increased participation came from the students themselves. The interest was so intense, however, that many school officials became concerned about the effect that this would have on the students. The passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution may have contributed to the enthusiasm of the girls and the concern of the administration. Despite any social influences that might have affected the trends, women leaders attempted to avoid the mistakes made by the men in their athletic programs. In 1917, the American Physical Education Association appointed a committee on Women's Athletics to "direct, safeguard and promote sports activities for girls and women." The concern of the committee had far-reaching effects, thus the highly emphasized young varsity basketball team at Kentucky College for Women disappeared almost as quickly as it appeared and was replaced by the "more wholesome" interclass competition. In April 1924, a Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Foundation was formed. This group presented a platform of standards for women's competition that favored competition for the enjoyment of the sport and that de-emphasized spectator sports, awards of extrinsic value, teams involved in the dangers of travel, and gate receipts. Before this group was formed, Kentucky College for Women was in line with its entire platform.

1926-1959: May festivals, carnivals, circuses and vaudevilles were popular at the Woman's Division of Centre College during this period. These provided opportunities to demonstrate athletic skills for an audience when spectator sports were not approved. They were also necessary as money-making projects if the women were to have the equipment and facilities necessary for an active program. This was generally the case in women's colleges during the first half of the twentieth century.

During the thirties, black serge bloomers and white middy blouses were replaced by short gym suits, and the intramurals flourished. In the mid-thirties, the Kentucky Federation of

Women's Athletic Associations was organized. This organization sponsored annual and semi-annual play days. The purpose of the organization was to "create a friendly rivalry among the colleges in Central Kentucky."

The social affairs connected with the play day were very much a part of the event; e.g., at the annual play day held at Centre in 1941, the teams were treated to lunch at the Country Club and tea at the end of the day, and after field hockey at the University of Kentucky in 1944, the Centre girls were given lunch and tickets to the University of Kentucky versus West Virginia football game. Play days and the related social events continued throughout the forties.

The Women's Athletic Association sponsored intramural contests in 16 different sports during this period. They also organized hikes and dance fetes. Clog dancing was popular and was often mentioned as entertainment during half time of the championship basketball games. Interest and participation were especially high during this period and the alumnae were quick to respond with enthusiasm about the importance of sports participation during their college years.

1959-1978: The second half of the twentieth century was one of rapid change. Centre College adopted a new curriculum and a new calendar. The women's campus was abandoned and the students were moved across town to new buildings on the former men's campus. An expansive building program was undertaken. A former high school building was converted into a facility for physical education for Centre women. The concerns of the students changed as world situations changed. As elsewhere, students became involved--at times fighting the system as it affected their lives, and at other times getting involved with the system to make changes.

Women demanded opportunities for participation, vacillating between emulating the men's program and creating a women's program. The leaders in the program during this period experienced frustrations, hard work, constant challenges and personal rewards which were usually of an intrinsic nature.

Until 1964, each woman student was required to take a class in basic activities or body mechanics, dance or rhythms, a team sport, two individual sports and swimming. Six semesters of physical education were required until 1966. By 1967, only four semesters of physical education were required and almost all classes were coeducational. Students could select any combination of activities to meet the requirement. In 1976, all classes were opened to men and women on a coeducational basis. A new requirement was adopted by the College faculty in 1978. Instead of the elective system previously used, this program requires that each student demonstrate a proficiency in aerobics and swimming, complete a first aid course, and a basic course in an individual sport, a team sport and a non-competitive activity such as dance or gymnastics.

Intramurals continued in popularity during this period along with the growing interest in intercollegiate competition. Intercollegiate basketball and field hockey teams were organized in 1960, a tennis team in 1965, track and field team in 1972 and a softball team in 1978. Since 1975, women have been invited to compete on the swimming, cross-country, soccer and golf teams with the men.

Centre is a member of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) and a charter member of the Kentucky Women's Intercollegiate Conference (KWIC). Centre women have

competed in both state and national championships.

Physical educators, through the AIAW, have continued to offer direction for quality programs for women with the focus on the individual participant whose primary role is a college student. This has always been the philosophy of Centre College regarding its sports program for women, and since World War II, for men, also.

Summary. The purpose of this study has been to trace the history of the women's physical education and sports program at Centre College. The history began with the founding of Henderson Female Institute, a school for young girls in Danville, Kentucky, which over a period of time became the female sector of Centre College of Kentucky.

The content of the physical education program was determined by examining the school catalogues and books on the history of physical education. It was necessary to rely extensively on yearbooks, questionnaires, and interviews with alumnae to determine the role of competitive sports in the school program.

With faculty members recruited from schools that were leaders in the profession, the women of Caldwell College, Kentucky College for Women and Centre College seem to have always had a physical education program based on the current philosophy of the day. In the nineteenth century, the physical education program at Caldwell College closely paralleled the programs in the more prestigious Eastern schools for young ladies. Delphine Hanna, chairman of the physical education department at Oberlin, influenced the program in the early twenties through her students who were appointed to teach at Kentucky College for Women.

Through the years, the emphasis changed from exercise for its health value to activities for their educational value. The program, which at one time consisted entirely of gymnastics, developed into a wide range of activities for health, leisure time, personal safety, and the educational goals of team play.

The competitive sports program was not in existence before the twentieth century. Basketball was introduced to the girls in 1904 and the enthusiasm was apparent from the beginning. The first intercollegiate team competed from 1915 to 1917. As school officials and professional women became concerned about the impact of professionalism in high competitive sports, the intercollegiate team was replaced by intramural teams. With an intramural championship as the highest goal, maintaining interest was increasingly difficult. To satisfy this need, play days became popular. These existed until the second half of the twentieth century when the women again formed intercollegiate teams and competed in regular season schedules.

Prior to 1960, the program usually included either intramural or intercollegiate teams--not both. With the onset of contemporary intercollegiate teams, the intramural program continued to grow with an emphasis on providing opportunities for students of all skill levels.

Opportunities for competition in sports were not always supported with money, staff, or publicity but the students competed in spite of these inadequacies. Student interest in athletics is not sudden or new--it has been in the heart of each generation of young women, at least for the past century.

Reference

1. Ainsworth, Dorothy. The History of Physical Education in Colleges for Women. New York: A. S. Barnes Co., 1930.